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1904

The NAMING: OF:THE:RIVER:

A POEM

CHAS·S·ROSS

DECORATED·AND·ILLUSTRATED

MAX von METZKE

To the memory of a departing race
this poem is dedicated
by
THE AUTHOR.

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GAILY flows the Tusket River,
Laughing 'round each leafy isle
Where the song-birds' sweet notes quiver
And the golden sunbeams smile.

Red trout sport within the shallows,
In the depths the salmon hides,
O'er its bosom skim the swallows,
As the river leaps and glides.

Tusket — from Niketaouksit:*
Great forked tidal river broad—
So called ere its terraced margin
Foot of white man yet had trod.

* In accordance with the logical opinion expressed by Hon. George Stayley Brown in his excellent history of Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia.

Long ago, the Soricoi, dwelling
In their wigwams on the banks,
While their winter's store was swelling,
To Ketchiniwesk offered thanks.

Vowed they then to name the river
That to them its treasures gave,
With a name to last forever;
So they held a council grave.

There were three chiefs of the nation,
Strong of sinew, great in fame,
And by virtue of their station
They must give the river name.

Spake the eldest of the sachems:
"Sons of the Abnaki race—
By the warmth that makes the summer,
By the tan on warrior's face,

"By the glow upon the waters
Ere the autumn day is done,
I would call our stream forever
Happy River of the Sun."

Spake the next in years: "My brothers—
By the rapids, flashing white
Driving down the tree uprooted
With the speed of eagle's flight,

"By the current running swifter
Than the fleetest in the chase,
Call our stream the name I offer:
River where the Waters Race."

Stepped the youngest chief before them,
Tall and straight as stands the pine,
Saying: "Fathers of all wisdom,
I have heard these words of thine,

"But whoso would give a title
To the river that we love,
Here, before the braves assembled,
Of the three must strongest prove."

max von metzke
1903

Came the tribesmen then together
On the bounteous river's shore,
And they took an eagle's feather
And with crimson stained it o'er ;

Then in blue again they dipped one—
Blue from root of shrub and tree,
And with deepest black they tipped one—
Colors of their chieftains three.

From a lightning-riven ash tree,
Seasoned wood of fibre sound,
Did each leader shape an arrow,
Slender, tapering, smooth and round.

Fixing to its head a spear-point
Chipped from flint—a treasure rare—
That its weight might send the arrow
Like a bird to cleave the air.

Then each took his colored feather
And he bound it to the haft
With the finest thongs of leather,
Making thus a perfect shaft.

From the ash again they borrowed
Each a piece to shape a bow,
And the afternoon had narrowed
When at last they stood in row—

Facing to the west, far distant,
Where the sun was falling low;
Proud they felt the wood resistant
As each right arm drew the bow,

For the arrow farthest driven
Out upon the river's breast,
Would its sender's choice have given
As the stream's name—thus their test.

Swift and strong from bowstring darting
Sped the arrows on that day—
Swift and strong and true their starting,
Wavering not upon the way;

Winging straight across the river
Till they reached the farther shore;
And the oldest brave had never
Seen such distance made before.

Struck with wonder were the old men—
Silent wonder held them all,
Till they saw the shaft of crimson
Down upon the pebbles fall.

Two yards more then fell the blue shaft,
And two chieftains turned away,
But the other's flashing eyes laughed
As the black dart kept its way;

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For its force was undiminished,
With such strength had it been sent,
And its mission only finished
When a birch tree's heart it rent.

Then the tribesmen gathered 'round him,
Strongest man of chieftains three,
And with gifts did they surround him,
Gave their finest deerskins free.

And the young chief's glorious mem'ry
With the stream will ever stay,
For the name he gave was TUSKET,
And 't will never pass away!

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